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ABSTRACT

This paper investigates how well today's career materials represent women workers in illustrations. The specific populations reported on in this paper, from which two samples were selected, were: (1) the student materials (N=1091) listed in the Vocational Guidance Quarterly (VGC) "Current Career Literature" bibliographies from 1970 through 1973, and (2) the high school level career education materials (N=168) listed in the two bibliographies prepared by the VT ERIC Clearinghouse. Specific materials were selected from the bibliographies and an instrument to assess the materials was developed, pilot-tested, revised and used. Variables assessing the illustrations included: (1) number of men and women; (2) environmental setting (indoor-outdoor); (3) observable interaction between people illustrated; (4) minority group; (5) minority group by sex; (6) occupations by sex; and (7) occupations by minority group. Results indicate that the current status of women in careers is not adequately represented in career materials. (Author/HMV)

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WOMEN IN ILLUSTRATIONS

OR

SOCIETY IS MYOPIC

SEX STEREOTYPING IN ILLUSTRATIONS IN CAREER MATERIALS

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SEX STEREOTYPING IN ILLUSTRATIONS IN CAREER MATERIALS

In order to make decisions about what type of career to follow, young people need information about the possible alternatives available and the implications of their choices. One of the basic sources of this information is career materials.

Borrow (1966) has pointed out that "occupational information is one of the most fundamental aspects of vocational guidance, yet, in practice, remains one of the most notoriously ineffective ones" (p. 11). According to Samler (1964), the realities of work, the work force and the labor structure are not really considered in occupational materials. The major emphasis is on the economics of working, while psychosocial factors are rarely considered.

Do career materials include the extent and variety of labor force participation of women? Kaufman, Schaefer, Lewis, Stevens, and House (1967) have pointed out that many of the expressed attitudes and plans of high school senior women are based on a very restricted view of the possibilities open to them as adult women. Other studies (Lee, Ray, Vetter, Murphy, and Sethney, 1971 and Vetter and Sethney, 1972) have documented the lack of information that high school women have about women in the labor force and how this affects the attitudes they hold and the plans they make.

Prediger, Roth, and Noeth (1973) surveyed the reactions of more than 9,000 eleventh graders to typical career guidance activities. They found that 39 percent of the males and 50 percent of the females indicated that a file of job descriptions, pamphlets, or books on jobs were of some or a lot of help in their career planning.

Birk, Cooner, and Tanney (1973) analyzed 2,004 illustrations that appeared in the Occupational Outlook Handbook, the Encyclopedia of Careers (two volumes), the SRA Occupational Briefs, and an array of typical career information pamphlets and brochures. They found that 67 percent of the illustrations were of men, 26 percent of women, and seven percent were of groups (men and women). Twenty-four percent of the pictures showing men in careers were outdoors, while only four percent of t women were shown outdoors. The authors indicated that "the American world of work seems to be almost exclusively populated by white men" (p. 4).

These results point to the necessity of having career guidance materials that adequately reflect the realities of the work world, so that young women who are seeking information from school personnel will not be handicapped in their career planning because of inaccurate presentation. How well do available career materials represent women workers in illustrations?

Methods and Procedures

Sample

The specific populations reported on in this paper[1], from which two samples were selected, were:

1. The student materials (N=1091) listed in the Vocational Guidance Quarterly (VGQ) "Current Career Literature" bibliographies (through the June 1973 issue) that had publication dates of 1970 or later.

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[1]The information reported in this paper was extracted from a larger study reported in Vetter, L., Stockburger, D.W., and Brose, C. Career Guidance Materials: Implications for Women's Career Development. Columbus, Ohio: The Center for Vocational Education, The Ohio State University, 1974. The research was conducted under a contract with the National Institute of Education, U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, but should not be interpreted as representing official National Institute of Education position or policy.

The materials listed in the VGQ had been rated using the National Vocational Guidance Association guidelines and were recommended for school use.

2. The high school level career education materials (N=168) listed in the two bibliographices prepared by the VT-ERIC Clearinghouse. One of the bibliographies was of non-commercial materials and the other was of commercial materials located during national searches conducted by Peat Marwick, and Mitchell (PMM).

Both populations were stratified, using the intermediate occupation classifications that the U.S. Bureau of the Census (1972) used to report occupational information for the 1970 census. This was done for two reasons: (1) to avoid, if possible, the over-representation of professional occupations that previous researchers (Perrone, 1968; Luker, 1973) had found, and (2) to give a basis for comparison with actual occupational participation in the labor force. Additional categories (Armed Services, General Information on Careers and Getting a Job, Industries and Fields, and Miscellaneous) were added to classify materials that covered more than one occupational area.

A total of 56 materials was selected from the PMM sample and 167 from the VGQ sample. Of the 167 originally included in the VGQ sample, 151 were located: many of the materials that were not located or received were materials listed as free upon request.

Instrumentation

An instrument to assess the materials was developed, pilot tested, revised and used. Variables assessing the illustrations included: number of men and women; environmental setting (indoor-outdoor); observable interaction between people illustrated; minority group; minority group by sex; occupations by sex, and occupations by minority group.

The reliability of the items with three raters judgements of the stereotyping in the materials ranged from .70 to 1.00.

Results

PMM Sample

The 56 materials in this sample included 1400 illustrations. The sample contained an approximately equal representation from each of the three years in the sample. The average length was approximately 121 pages with an average of 24 illustrations of people per material.

There was an average of about 28 illustrations of people per material within the 86 percent of the materials that contained illustrations. Sixty-one percent of the illustrations were of men only, 21 percent were of women only, and 18 percent were of both sexes together. Of the illustrations that contained members of only one sex, 75 percent were of men and 25 percent were of women. It can be concluded, therefore, that men were shown more often than women and in a proportion that is greater than the actual proportion in the work force.

One of the striking findings was that 17 percent of both men and women, 33 percent of men only, and four percent of women only were shown outdoors. It appeared that the women illustrated in these materials may be outside only in the presence of a man, and then not in the same degree as men only are pictured outdoors.

In further examination of the illustrations, it was found that when only one sex was illustrated, 57 percent of the men and 57 percent of the women were shown alone rather than in groups of two or more. When two or more people were shown, 68 percent of both sexes, 75 percent of men only, and 67 percent of women only were shown as interacting.

With respect to illustrations of minority groups, it was found that approximately 11 percent of the men and 15 percent of the women illustrated were Black. Four percent of the men and three percent of the women belonged to other minority groups such as Oriental American, Native American or other.

In terms of occupational categories, 50 percent of the men and 67 percent of the women were illustrated in professional occupations, compared to actual labor force proportions of 14 percent and 16 percent. Although 14 percent of the female labor force is in operative positions, there were almost no illustrations of this. Twelve percent of the illustrations of women were in clerical positions, although 35 percent of the women in the labor force are in clerical positions.

VGQ Sample

There were 450 illustrations of people in the 151 materials in the sample. The materials in this sample averaged about eleven pages with three illustrations of people per material.

Eighty-three percent of the materials in the sample contained illustrations in which 61 percent were of men only, 21 percent of women only, and 18 percent of men and women together. Of the illustrations that were of only one sex, 25 percent were of women and 75 percent were of men. Analysis of some aspects of the illustrations by sex showed that 68 percent of the men only and 84 percent of the women only were pictured alone rather than in groups of two or more. When two or more people were shown, 80 percent of the men only, 61 percent of the women only, and 77 percent of both sexes together were shown as interacting. It was also found that 22 percent of the men only, 10 percent of men and women, and six percent of the women only were pictured as being outdoors.

Illustrations of minority groups showed about seven percent of the men and 11 percent of the women pictured were Black. Two percent of the women, and less than one percent of the men represented other minority groups.

Professional occupations were also over-represented in this sample, with 55 percent of the men and 56 percent of the women being illustrated in professional occupations. There were no illustrations in the materials of women in the managerial occupations, crafts occupations, transport equipment operative occupations, laborers, or farm worker occupations. Almost all occupational categories had more men only illustrated than women only. The one notable exception was in the armed services category where 27 percent of the illustrations were of men only. This is due to the fact that one long book, Careers for Women in Uniform, was in this category. The same category had more illustrations of women outdoors than any other category.

In terms of minority representation for both men and women, the Armed Services, General Information, and Industries and Fields categories had a large percentage of Blacks illustrated. For men only illustrations, the Managers, Laborers, Service, and Miscellaneous categories had a sizeable proportion of Blacks illustrated while the professional category was notably absent from the list. Black women on the other hand, were well-represented in the professional and sales occupational groups. Other minority groups were not represented enough in this sample to comment.

Comparison of the Two Samples

Although the VGQ and the FMM samples were taken from two different sources with only limited overlap between the populations of materials,

the results were remarkably consistent across the samples. The argument will be made that sex-role stereotyping is a phenomenon that cuts across specific populations of career materials and is evident in many of society's written products.

The differences between the two samples can be readily observed. First, the materials in the PMM sample were longer, containing an average of 121 pages to eleven in the VGQ sample. The PMM materials contained more illustrations. The majority of the VGQ sample were written by corporate authors, while less than a third of the materials in the PMM sample were written by corporate authors. The VGQ sample also had a 30 percent representation of non-commercial publishers compared to a two percent representation in the PMM sample. Thus, there appear to be some rather large differences in the types of materials sampled in each case.

Despite these differences, the separation of the illustrations into classes of pictures of men only, women only, and both men and women pictured together, showed that each sample had a similar percentage in each class, namely 61 percent, 21 percent, and 18 percent, respectively. In both cases, when only one sex was illustrated, 75 percent were of men only. In both samples, the percentage of men illustrated outdoors was greater than that of both sexes pictured together and women only outdoors. The PMM sample was more likely to have illustrations of Blacks than the VGQ sample, although in both samples Black women were shown with a greater relative frequency than Black men. Professional occupations were over-represented to a greater extent for women than for men.

Discussion

Most of the results reported above will not be surprising to anyone familiar with career literature and sensitized as to the nature of sex-role

stereotyping. To a greater or lesser extent, almost all of the materials were found to be stereotyped.

One of the most difficult problems facing writers and illustrators of career materials is whether the materials should reflect the present or some picture of the future. Since the materials are intended for students who are planning careers for the rest of their lives, it seems reasonable that the materials should present some predictions for the future. The U.S. Department of Labor provides projections for up to ten years into the future for both the labor force as a whole and specific occupations. There undoubtedly is some error in such predictions, but the predictions are accurate enough to aid in the educated planning of a career. With respect to women in the labor force, a reasonable prediction is that more women will be employed outside the home in years to come in a greater variety of occupations than at present (Women's Bureau, 1973). More women will be employed in occupations that have traditionally been "men's occupations" and vice versa. These trends should be presented in career literature.

The preceding analysis showed that even the current status of women in careers is not adequately represented in career materials. Thus, coincident with a presentation of the predictions for the future, a non-stereotyped career material must illustrate an honest picture of the present. There are women working in every occupational category for which the Bureau of the Census collects data. Women constitute nearly 40 percent of the labor force. It is obvious that the people who are selecting illustrations for career materials are not providing accurate information to young people about their career alternatives. Such stereotyping of career opportunities does not encourage young women to consider the wide range of career options available.

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